



## 78: Familiar by cali-chan

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**Summary:** There was something about her that tugged at the back of Scott's mind... something he couldn't quite place. "I'm sorry, are you sure we've never met before? You seem familiar, for some reason." Romance/humor, post-S2, Mike/Eleven.

## 78: Familiar

**Familiar.** PG, romance/humor, post-S2, Mike/Eleven.

*There was something about her that tugged at the back of Scott's mind... something he couldn't quite place. "I'm sorry, are you sure we've never met before? You seem familiar, for some reason."*

Shout-out to pathvain\_aelien, whose story *Kissing Cousins* reminded me how much I adore Mr. Clarke, and how hilarious it is that he probably still thinks Eleven is Mike's cousin. -snort-

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Scott Clarke had never been particularly into sports, but he was born and raised in Hawkins and he did at least have a modicum of hometown pride. He also strongly believed that a healthy dose of school spirit— sports programs included— was important to give kids an incentive to do their best in school, and relieve the tedium a little bit. Granted, he often wished that the academic clubs were taken as seriously by the school board as the sports programs were, and he took every opportunity to try and get more funding for non-athletic activities, but he didn't resent sports. If anything, he liked to support them as much as he could, as well.

Plus, his fiancée was a big fan of softball. So here they were, on a Friday night, watching the Hawkins High female softball team absolutely trounce some obviously inferior team from a couple of counties over. They were definitely headed for a local win, and the crowd was eating it up. Go Tigers!

He'd excused himself momentarily to go to the toilet; his fiancée stayed behind to make sure no one took their seats. Knowing the layout of the school very well, he had headed straight for the bathrooms inside the gym— he wasn't fond of the Porta Potties they rented for these big sporting events— and was making his way back to the bleachers when he caught sight of one of his former students walking into his field of vision.

Scott smiled. It had been a few years since he'd had Mike Wheeler and his group of friends in his classroom— they'd be, what, sophomores now? Juniors?— but he'd seen them many times since they moved on to high school nonetheless. Sometimes he just came across them while out in the town. Sometimes they crossed the street to his office at Hawkins Middle with some query about A/V instrumentation that he had more experience with; Mike in particular, because he was the president of the club.

Initially he found it a little puzzling, however, coming across Mike at a sports game, of all places (those boys *really* weren't into sports), but then he remembered that the redheaded girl who was pitching for the Hawkins team was Max Mayfield, who'd been a student of his as well, and she was friends with Mike and the boys. They were probably here to support her; they were a really close-knit group.

Mike was coming from the bleachers, not directly walking in the direction Scott himself was coming from, but diagonally; likely he was heading to the concessions kiosks that were set up just outside the field, to get something to eat.

More importantly, though, he was not alone: he had his arm around a brown-haired girl Scott assumed was his girlfriend. He'd never talked to the girl; as far as he knew she'd never been a student of his (and Scott was very good at remembering his students), but he'd seen her from afar with Mike and the others around town, or around the high school grounds sometimes when Scott looked across the street from the parking lot.

They seemed like a cute couple, honestly. Usually when he saw them they were holding hands and talking animatedly with their friends or, as they were right this moment, whispering sweet nothings to each other as they walked, making each other smile in the way only young people in love could. Scott knew he was a bit of a romantic— his fiancée reminded him of that often— but even if he hadn't been, he was glad to see one of his favorite students so happy.

"Michael Wheeler," Scott called out as they came closer. The pair looked startled for a second, like they'd only just realized there were other people around them, and turned their gazes in unison from each other to him as their steps slowed down. "Surprised to meet you

here."

"Hey, Mr. Clarke!" Mike greeted in kind, a bright smile overtaking his features. The two of them stopped directly in front of him, Mike enthusiastically extending a hand for him to shake. "Yeah, a friend of ours is on the softball team," he explained, confirming Scott's suspicions from earlier. "How've you been? Everything going well in the world of middle school?"

"I'm good, I'm good," Scott replied to his first question with a nod of his head. "And, well, you know, not as many promising students as we used to have a few years ago," he added, hinting at Mike with a tilt of his head, which the young man acknowledged with a laugh. "Still, as a teacher one has to keep trying."

"I'm sure some other group of nosy, annoying little snots will get there soon," Mike retorted, still chuckling, "and then you'll realize you don't miss us at all."

"Dustin would never let that happen," Scott declared, referencing Mike's curly-haired friend who still called him from time to time to ask random science questions. Mike laughed again. "How's high school treating you?"

"It's okay," Mike answered with a shrug. Given how much Scott knew Mike loved learning, he figured maybe the science teachers at Hawkins High weren't as enthusiastic about their subjects as he was. A shame, really. "My parents are already bugging me about college, but I haven't really started looking," the young man added. Yes, that definitely sounded like Karen Wheeler.

"Ah, you still have time," Scott assured him, always of the mind that young people had to make their own decisions with guidance but without too much pressure; all that did was sour kids on the choices they were making. "I'm sure wherever you end up, you'll do great."

"Thanks," his former student retorted, before turning to the girl standing next to him, who had been silent this entire time, and tugging her closer by her hand. "Oh, that's right— you two haven't met, have you? Mr. Clarke, this is my girlfriend, Jane," he introduced her.

The girl gave him a smile and a wave since she couldn't shake his hand, as her own was still tightly clasped around Mike's. "We haven't. It's nice to meet you, Mr. Clarke. Mike talks a lot about you," she greeted him in a soft, quiet voice.

"Only good things, I hope," Scott replied, nodding his head at her and smiling in kind. Now that he got his first good look at her, he could see she was indeed a beautiful girl, and she and Mike looked good together. But there was something about her that tugged at the back of Scott's mind... something he couldn't quite place. "I'm sorry, are you sure we've never met before? You seem familiar, for some reason."

The couple exchanged a slightly wide-eyed glance, which Scott found a little odd, before turning back to him, Mike hurrying to shake his head in response. "No, I don't think so. She never took your class—Jane only moved to Hawkins when we were in freshman year. She's Chief Hopper's daughter; you heard about that, right?"

"Yes, that's right," Scott acknowledged, remembering that the news of Chief Hopper's newfound daughter had been the talk of the town a while back, everybody eager to come up with their own theories of where the girl came from and why the Chief hadn't revealed her existence until she was a teenager. Scott wasn't one for gossip, but the rumors had been impossible to avoid for a while there. He just hadn't put two and two together and figured out that the new girl Mike and his friends were always hanging out with was the Chief's daughter herself.

But even knowing this, he could swear he'd seen her somewhere else... before... "Maybe we met in passing at some point?" The teens still looked somewhat apprehensive. "I don't mean to be pushy, it's just that you remind me of someone..."

He was halfway through the sentence when a face popped into the foreground of his mind. "Oh, I remember now," he affirmed when he finally pinpointed it. "You look a lot like Mike's... cousin, was it? What was her name..." It took him a second to remember, gaze unfocused as he thought. "Eleanor! Yes, Eleanor."

When he looked back at the pair, he noticed their expressions had

gone from somewhat apprehensive to outright panicky. "Is everything alright?" he asked, suddenly worried he'd said something wrong.

"No!" Mike exclaimed abruptly, before correcting. "I mean, yes, everything's fine. It's just—" He scoffed. "I don't really think that Jane looks like Eleanor all that much. Like, that'd be weird, right?" He let out an awkward little laugh as Jane nodded beside him. "Who knows, maybe Jane just has one of those faces."

The girl stopped nodding, only to turn toward Mike with a confused expression on her face, almost like she didn't understand the expression he just used. Scott found this very peculiar, but Mike just nodded at her and continued speaking, like this was something that happened often. "I mean, Eleanor was blonde. You know, because she was from Sweden and all." Jane nodded again, which Scott took to mean she'd probably met Eleanor herself. Not that every Swedish person was blond.

"And anyway," Mike went on babbling, like there were many things he needed to get out really quickly, "you must've misunderstood, though, because Eleanor is not my cousin. Not at *all*." Scott found the phrasing curious, because it's not like you could only *partly* be someone's cousin, but Mike steamrolled through that particular concern. "She's really, uh— she's *Will's* cousin! Yes. Because, you know, why would *my* cousin fly all the way from Sweden for Will's funeral? That makes no sense." He scoffed again, this time with a shake of his head, emphasizing his dismissal of the mere idea. "I mean, Byers is totally a Swedish last name, right?"

"I... don't know, actually," Scott replied, a little bewildered at the amount of information Mike had relayed in what felt like a fraction of a second. Before Mike could find a second wind and launch into further explanation, however, he added, "I guess I must've heard wrong, then." He turned to Jane with a warm smile. "Either way, it's nice to meet you, Jane. I'm glad someone finally realized what a great guy Mike here is."

He could see the young man become a little flustered at the unexpected compliment. "Come on, Mr. Clarke..." he muttered under his breath, obviously a little bit chagrined.

Jane, however, gave him a brilliant smile and grabbed onto Mike's arm, snuggling happily into his side. "I've known that since the day we met." As if her touch alone could draw Mike away from his moment of bashfulness, he looked down at her and smiled. She met his gaze and they stared at each other for a heartbeat, as if communicating a lover's secret without the need for words.

He didn't know much about Jane, and he didn't know anything about their history, but it was clear to him from that gesture alone that they cared for each other very deeply. He was really happy for them.

"Well," he started with a fond smile, "I should be getting back to the bleachers. My fiancée will be wondering where I disappeared off to." He nodded at each of them separately. "Jane. Mike. It was nice seeing you." They responded in kind and he continued on his way back to his seat.

Because they'd been headed toward the concessions kiosks in the first place, Scott could still see them if he turned his head a little. He glanced back at them once, only to see Mike run a hand over his face, looking like he was letting out a groan. Probably embarrassed at his babbling, if Jane's reaction was any indication; she was laughing and patting his shoulder consolingly.

Then she pulled his hand away from his face and cradled his cheeks delicately, telling him something Scott couldn't hear from that distance before lifting herself up on her tiptoes and pecking his lips once. When she pulled back, he was smiling sheepishly, and she laughed again, her giggles ringing out clearly across the distance, like a bell.

Scott was almost to the back of the bleachers when he heard someone yell out, "Hey, El, did you want fries or chips with your burger?!" The nickname caught his attention and he paused in his stride, looking over his shoulder in their direction. He noted that Dustin Henderson, who had asked the question, was standing by one of the kiosks, waving excitedly at Mike and Jane as they made their way to them. Will Byers stood at his side, already carrying two baskets of food in his arms. Lucas Sinclair was nowhere nearby, and Scott figured he probably stayed behind to guard everyone's spots.



"Fries!" Jane was the one to answer as she pulled Mike by the hand toward the food stands. Scott contemplated the four of them as they reunited, and not for the first time when it came to this particular group, felt like he was simply missing something— some critical piece of information they all knew, that no one else was privy to. He wondered what it could be. He also wondered if he was just imagining it.

It didn't really matter, though, as long as they were happy and had each other. That was all a teacher could want for his students, really. With one last satisfied glance at the four of them, he turned the corner and went back to his seat, where his fiancée greeted him with a play-by-play account of the last two Tigers runs he had missed while he was away.

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**Notes:** The greatest tragedy in *Stranger Things* is that (unless the Duffers pull some epic fanfiction-y twist in season 3) Eleven will never take a class with Mr. Clarke. :( Seriously, I hope we at least get to see him next season. I'm sure the Duffers can find a way!

I have this headcanon that Max has really good aim, and is generally the best at sports in the party. I don't even know where that idea came from, but it's come up in *If you love the girl* and *What Makes You Different* already, so... I guess this is a thing now?